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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on students enrolled in academic CPR workshops in the summer of 2002. The goal of the study is to examine changes in the population of students with academic problems. The CPR workshops are a requirement for students that are subject to dismissal. The study was conducted in the summer of 2003 on the telephone with a random sample of 30 of the 304 students. These are some of the conclusions that were drawn based on the interviews: (1) students were satisfied with the workshops giving it a score of 7.9 out 10; (2) students found the content of the workshops to be useful, especially time management skills; (3) students expressed that barriers to success were objective test taking and limited tutoring and counseling; and (4) students accepted responsibility for being on academic probation. Based on these findings, this document makes several recommendations: (1) future studies should be done with a larger sample; (2) future studies should be done right after the end of the summer classes so that the students have more fresh memories; and (3) since workshops appear to be effective, it would be wise to expand these workshops in the future. Contains a copy of the questionnaire used in the phone interviews. (MZ)

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Interviews with Students Enrolled in Academic CPR Workshops, Summer 2002

College of the Canyons

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Interviews with Students
Enrolled in Academic CPR Workshops -- Summer 2002

Executive Summary

The overall purpose of this study was to investigate the changes in the population of students in academic difficulty, including changes as a result of newly implemented policies and programs.

This report represents the second of three segments designed to study students in academic difficulty as well as the procedures used to assist them, and was designed to glean the experiences and attitudes from a sample of students who enrolled in Academic CPR Workshops in 2002. These workshops were required of any student subject to dismissal.

In Spring 2003, telephone interviews were conducted with a random sample of 20 of the 304 students who attended a CPR Workshop during the Summer of 2002.

Interviews highlighted the following topics:

- Respondents expressed an overall satisfaction with the workshop of 7.9 out of 10, including satisfaction with the time and location, group dynamics, counseling staff, and facilitators.
- Attendees found the workshop content to be useful, especially time management between personal and school responsibilities, and how to read their transcripts and calculate their GPA.
- Barriers to success centered on objective test taking, and limited tutoring and counseling resources. Several requests were made for more one-on-one sessions with tutors and counselors.
- Students in academic difficulty accepted responsibility for their situation, and also for seeking the services offered by the college.
- Respondents tended to rate Student Services very highly, and expressed gratitude for their efforts.

Recommendations:

Research on students in academic difficulty should be expanded to include a larger sample. Although this study gathered a wide range of helpful information, a sample of 20 is limited in characterizing the broad array of important facts, perceptions, and suggestions by the students in greatest need of help.

Several respondents noted that too much time had passed to recall the workshop accurately. This was designed into the study to capture the impact of the workshop one full semester afterward. If further interviews are conducted, it is suggested that they be held at the beginning of the following semester in order to take advantage of students' more recent memories.

The workshops themselves appear to be highly effective in giving the student valuable information, motivation, and hope. Even in these difficult fiscal times, expanding workshops to more students on probation would have a great return on investment for them, as well as for the College and community.

For further information, please contact Dr. Chelley Maple at 661.362.3099 (chelley.maple@canyons.edu).

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COLLEGE OF THE CANYONS

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Institutional Development and Technology

Interviews with Students Enrolled in Academic CPR Workshops Summer 2002

Report # 138

P. Scott Dixon, M.A.

September 2003

Table of Contents

Introduction 3
Methods 4
Major Findings 5
Conclusions 10
Recommendations 10
Appendix A: Interview Schedule and Questionnaire A1

Index of Tables and Figures

Table 1: Comparison of Sample with Population of Workshop Enrollees 5
Figure 1: Overall Satisfaction with the Workshop 6

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- Ms. Kathleen Curtis, Institutional Development and Technology, for expert editing, graphics and layout design.

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Introduction

The purpose of the overall study was to investigate the changes in the population of students in academic difficulty, including changes as a result of newly implemented policies.

The Matriculation Director requested the study be completed in three parts.

1. To study the changes in the academic standings of students in academic difficulty over time. To study the demographic makeup of these categories. In addition, examine the efficacy of the recently enacted workshop intervention on this population disaggregated by academic standing.
2. To conduct interviews with some of the students who took the workshop in Summer 2002 in order to gather qualitative evidence of the personal impact of these workshops.
3. To set up a system to longitudinally track students in academic difficulty. This tracking system will follow cohorts in order to see what happens to them, academically, from initial flagging onward. How are the demographics changing within the categories? Are there fluctuations and patterns in the numbers of students?

This report addresses the second segment, which examines the experiences and attitudes of enrollees, as well as suggestions for the Academic CPR Workshops and COC, in general.

The sequence of events for students in academic difficulty are as follows. The 2002-2003 catalogue explains the rules regarding probation and dismissal:

- Students are placed on probation if their GPA falls below 2.0, or they fail to complete 50 percent of their classes. Students on probation receive notification in the mail, which includes information on resources available to them, such as the Tutorial/Learning/Computer (TLC) lab.
- Students are subject to dismissal (STD) after two consecutive semesters on probation. These students are again notified regarding their status and reminded of the resources available to them. In addition, they are notified that they **MUST attend an Academic CPR Workshop**. These workshops are held several times each semester.

- Students are dismissed after three consecutive semesters of probation.
- A student who has been dismissed may request reinstatement after one semester has elapsed. Multiple dismissals may require a longer period of absence. Dismissed students may appeal to a counselor to be reinstated without a break in semesters.

Methods

The information utilized in this study originated from several sources. The data file of students who signed up for the workshops came from an on-line sign-up form that populated an Access database (PASW.mdb).

The names of students who signed up for the workshop were entered into SPSS (a statistical program) and merged with their academic standing data from Datatel and enrollment data from the Chancellor's Office referential files. A specialized Datatel query was implemented to aggregate the information used in the SACS (Student Academic Standings) FrontView screen.

The questionnaire was approved by Dr. Maple, Director of Matriculation, and Ms. Meuschke, Interim Senior Research Analyst. Refer to the appendix for the instrument.

A sampling frame was generated from the list of all students who signed up for an Academic CPR Workshop during July or August of 2002. Of the 304 students who signed up for a workshop, 206 students actually attended one. Interestingly, only 184 of the 206 attended one or more credit courses past census, although this was not a criterion for an interview. Random numbers were assigned to each name on the sampling frame, and 120 numbers were selected for interview. Eighty-four students were called before the goal of 20 interviews was reached.

As indicated in Table 1, ethnicity, gender and age of the sample were fairly close to the population of students who enrolled in the Academic CPR workshop. Refer to Report 132, *Academic Standing and Students in Academic Difficulty – Fall 2002* for demographic description for all academic standings.

	Ethnicity					Gender		Age (median)
	African American	Asian	Latino	White	Other	Female	Male	
Workshop n=284	5.0%	2.0%	24.0%	48.0%	21.0%	47.0%	53.0%	20.5 yrs.
Sample n=20	0.0%	5.0%	35.0%	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%	60.0%	21.0 yrs.
Difference	-5.0%	3.0%	11.0%	-8.0%	-1.0%	-7.0%	7.0%	0.5 yr.

Table 1: Comparison of Sample with Population of Workshop Enrollees

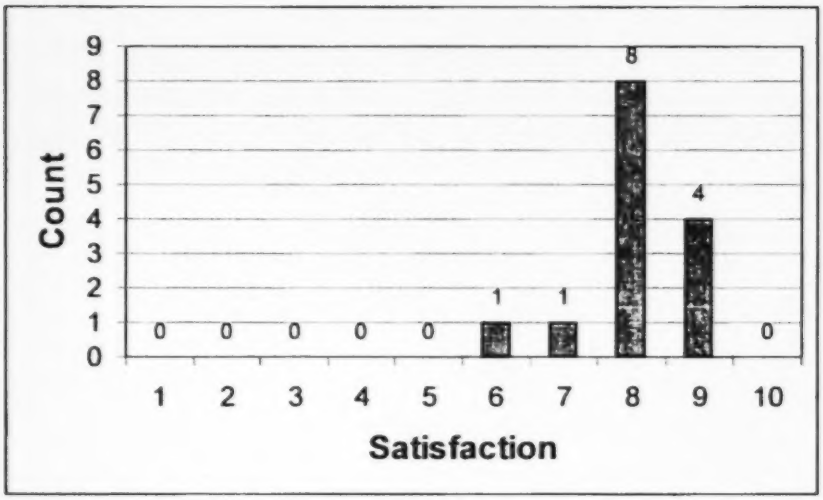
Phone calls were made between 9 AM and noon, and between 4 PM and 7 PM in late April 2003. Three attempts were made before the name was eliminated as "no answer." Interviewees were assured that their responses were confidential and voluntary. (In fact, the responses were technically anonymous, because the list of names was destroyed after the interviews.) Conversations were NOT recorded electronically. Notes were transcribed immediately upon completion of an interview.

Major Findings

Overall, students were very satisfied with the workshop, averaging 7.9 out a maximum of 10. Of those who answered the item (14 out of 20), the lowest rating was six, and the highest was nine (refer to Figure 1).

The first two questions in the survey dealt with satisfaction with the time and location of the workshop, the length, and the class size of the workshop. All but one student was satisfied with these issues. Most respondents liked the fact that they could pick from several times in order to schedule it during times that they were already at school. They appreciated being able to schedule it around their work. One student wished there were more scheduling options, such as on the weekend, or very early or late on weekdays.

Figure 1: Overall Satisfaction with the Workshop



The next set of questions addressed respondents' experience with, and plans for, utilizing counseling at COC. First, they were asked if they would have liked more one-on-one time with a counselor instead of the group discussion in the workshop. About half of the respondents thought that a personal session with a counselor would have been more helpful. In addition, there were mixed responses to the utilization of counseling at COC. Some students had not seen a counselor at the time of the workshop, but intended to. One respondent said, "That was one of the things that I should have done. It would be expensive for the college to see every student, but it would be worth it." Some students had never seen a counselor, and some students had made use of the service both before and after the workshop.

There was 100% satisfaction with the knowledge and helpfulness of the workshop facilitator. Several teaching styles noted. One session had two facilitators, each of whom circulated in the group to answer individual questions. Another instructor took a survey of topics at the beginning of the workshop, and then spent the rest of the session answering the top 10. Two respondents complimented the instructors on the way they handled rude students in the group. There seemed to be satisfaction with the proportion of lecture and discussion.

Several topics were reported as helpful. Facilitators talked about how to get off probation, or how to get back in school. They examined the withdrawal rules, and gave information on tutoring services. Students were grateful to find how their GPAs were calculated, as well as how to determine the grades they needed the next semester in order to be removed from probation. One student said, "It gave us something to shoot for."

Time management and study habits were the most popular. A student said that she found it helpful to learn "how to study in a shorter period of time. How to take shorthand notes, and write smaller. And, how to figure out what to study and what to ignore." One student learned how to make enough time for studies. "Don't go to so many classes that you can't handle it. I work full-time and ... they told me that maybe one class would be enough."

Another theme was how to balance social life with college responsibilities. Students were told how to concentrate on their workload rather than their personal lives. "It helped us focus on academic responsibilities versus social activities." Another student said that she was shown "that it is OK not to dive into a full schedule -- not to take on too much. It's OK to take one class at a time and do well in it."

Transcripts were considered helpful. One student said it helped him see his whole past and what he was doing wrong. "Transcripts showed me what I could and couldn't do to get back in." Another respondent said that he learned how credits, codes, and transfer worked, "and how to stay on top of things." One student said that he was able to see which classes to retake.

When asked what they wanted to learn more of, one respondent said he would like to know which classes would raise their GPA as fast as possible. Several students expressed the need for strategies on how to pass objective tests. In jest, one man asked how he could pass a course without having to attend class.

The next set of questions addressed general concerns regarding barriers to student success and recommendations for ways the College can help. A majority of respondents cited the conflict

between their personal lives and the demands of college. For example, students cited friends, spouse, children, and full-time employment. The stress was often cited as "unnecessary," yet, as one student said, "I work 40 hours. I sleep and work. COC is third. Life happens; it's not something I can dictate."

Two respondents said that class scheduling should provide blocks of courses in such a way that minimizes "wasted time between classes." Another said that teachers pay is too low and classes are too crowded.

Three students cited objective examinations as a major barrier. "I study and still don't do well on the tests. I understand the material and I can talk about it, but I fail the tests. I don't think they can show me how to take tests."

Respondents were asked for ways that the college could facilitate student success. Two comments were made about the policy of dismissal for academic difficulty. One cited this policy as the major barrier to his success. "You are too quick to pull the plug. We pay our money. You shouldn't expel us if we have to stop coming. Life happens. If we stop coming, it doesn't hurt the teacher or the college. School is unfortunately behind work in importance. That's why I went to community college, so if I had to quit it wouldn't cost me $20,000."

Expanded tutoring was a popular suggestion, especially for math, English and nursing. Flexible times and delivery methods were requested. Two students asked for more one-on-one tutoring, instead of the group setting. "There is no privacy to ask questions. Everyone is in a hurry and the teacher is talking to the whole table, not to one person's problems." Another suggested offering a separate room for math and English "for people like us."

One student cited the Bridges Program as especially helpful for LVNs studying to be RNs.
Two students mentioned the convenience of the University Center as helping them reach their academic goal.

Two students expressed gratitude to the welding instructor, and explained that he mingled and communicated with all the students in the program, "even those who were not in his specific class."

More counseling was also suggested, especially regarding scheduling of classes, finding a major, and general guidance. One said that freshmen "don't ask for help because they don't want to look stupid." A respondent encouraged COC to phone students in academic difficulty to check on them, "to find out what we want – communicate with us!" In addition, administrators were encouraged to visit classes "to see what's going on. Sometimes it's the teacher, not the student. They talk at the university level and we just got out of high school." One student did not know that she could take a medical leave. Two dismissed students thought they were expelled forever. It should be noted that students with questions were given the phone number to the counseling department.

For the most part, respondents took responsibility for their academic difficulty. They often cited attendance, discipline, and motivation as their biggest problem. "It's not the college; it's my own personal issues. People themselves are the problem. I need to do it on my own. COC gives a lot. It has good programs. It was me that messed up." Commitment. It's not like high school – you don't HAVE to be there. Students need to be dedicated and give the time to do it, but the older you get the more comes up. There are priorities and students need to focus." One student said the workshop was a good second chance for those who did not take college seriously the first time. Another said that it helped motivate them to action by getting their attention.

Overall, the reputation of student services was high among all respondents. Several respondents said that the college "stayed on my butt" and persevered in getting them back on track. "There are all kinds of help at COC: TLC and office hours. It's better than at UC. They do a good job. I dreaded high school, but COC is great."

Conclusions

This report represents the second of three segments designed to study students in academic difficulty as well as the procedures used to assist them, and was designed to glean the experiences and attitudes from a sample of students who enrolled in Academic CPR Workshops in 2002. These workshops were required of any student subject to dismissal.

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- Barriers to success centered on objective test taking, and limited tutoring and counseling resources. Several requests were made for more one-on-one sessions with tutors and counselors.
- Students in academic difficulty accepted responsibility for their situation, and also for seeking the services offered by the college.
- Respondents tended to rate Student Services very highly, and expressed gratitude for their efforts.

Recommendations

Research on students in academic difficulty should be expanded to include a larger sample. Although this study gathered a wide range of helpful information, a sample of 20 is limited in characterizing the broad array of important facts, perceptions, and suggestions by the students in greatest need of help.

Several respondents noted that too much time had passed to recall the workshop accurately. This was designed into the study to capture the impact of the workshop one full semester afterward. If further interviews are conducted, it is suggested that they be held at the beginning of the following semester in order to take advantage of students' more recent memories.

The workshops themselves appear to be highly effective in giving the student valuable information, motivation, and hope. Even in these difficult fiscal times, expanding workshops to more students on probation would have a great return on investment for them, as well as for the College and community.

Appendix A

Interview Schedule and Questionnaire

Introduction:
Hello. Is this [read name]? I am Scott Dixon, a researcher for College of the Canyons. I'm calling to get your opinions on the Academic CPR workshops that you attended last year. We are interested in learning whether it was helpful to you, and ways that we might be able to improve it. Your responses will be completely confidential, and your participation is voluntary. It will only take a few minutes. Do you have time for a few questions? [If not...] When is a good time to call back?

First, some specific questions about the workshop. Please feel free to elaborate on any question that you think is important.

1. Was it offered at a convenient time and location?
2. The workshop is 1 1/2 hours long. Was this too short, too long, or about right?
3. Was the size of the group too small, too large, or just about right?
4. Did you want to have more time one-on-one time with the counselor or was the group discussion enough?
5. Had you ever seen a counselor before this workshop?
6. Did you decide to make an individual appointment with a counselor after this workshop?
7. Was the workshop instructor helpful?
8. Was the instructor knowledgeable?
9. Did the instructor try to get the group involved in discussion or was it mostly lecture?
10. There was a workbook and a set of transcripts that were handed out to each workshop participant. Were these helpful? What topics were most helpful?
11. Were there any special topics in the book that were NOT helpful?
12. Did you read through to the end of the workbook either in the class or later on?
13. What would you have liked to learn more of in the workshop?
14. On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being the best, what is your overall satisfaction with the workshop? Why?
15. If you were the dean, what would you do to help students in academic difficulty?

Now, some general questions. Again, please feel free to elaborate on any question that you think is important.

16. What do you see as the greatest barrier to student success in college?
17. What is your educational goal [degree, certificate, training, etc.]?
18. What can the college do to better help you reach your goal?
19. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Thank you very much for your feedback! It will help us improve our services, and help students reach their goals.

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